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Sen. Birkholz's effort to boost forestry industry approved

LANSING — Bipartisan legislation that would help the state's timber industry won passage today in the Senate, said Sen. Patty Birkholz, R-Saugatuck Township.

The package would promote better management of private and state forests while assisting small business owners and increasing employment opportunities.

Birkholz's bill would create 10 renaissance zones for forest-products processing facilities. A facility located in a renaissance zone would not have to pay taxes.

"Forestry is an important component in Michigan's economy and it has been threatened recently with rising demand and low supplies," Birkholz said. "Providing companies and facilities with incentives such as tax breaks will help keep jobs in Michigan and local workers employed, increase the timber supply and keep our forests healthy for everyone to enjoy."

Michigan's timber prices have risen to be among the highest in the nation because of supply shortages and increased demand. The high prices threaten the industry in Michigan and the many jobs it provides.

The forestry industry employs about 200,000 people and contributes \$12 billion in economic activity. Michigan's timberland acreage is the nation's fifth largest with 19 million acres.

The bills in the package are SBs 913, 914, 917 and 919, and House Bills 5453, 5454, 5455 and 5456.

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